Learner Handbook

August 2019

To be read in conjunction with the relevant programme handbook

What's in this handbook…

Welcome!

You are welcome as a new learner, or indeed as a returning learner, to SIPTU College. We look forward to working with you and hope you have both an enjoyable experience and a successful outcome.

This Learner Handbook sets out some initial information about SIPTU College and you should also consult the relevant programme brochure as each programme is organised, assessed and accredited differently. Your pre-application brochure, your introductory session and your conversations with tutors, will provide additional details for you as you progress through your course.

We value your evaluation feedback at the end of your course and informally through your tutors at any time.

Best wishes for a successful course.

Tish Gibbons

HEAD OF COLLEGE

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Kilmainham,

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How to get here…
Bus Route 123 – the stop after St. James' Hospital
On the LUAS red line, half way between the Rialto and Suir Road stops

We also have classrooms at several other locations around the country including: SIPTU offices in Waterford, Cork, Galway, Mullingar; FORSA offices in Limerick and Sligo.

About SIPTU College

SIPTU College is Ireland's only trade union college and has responsibility for the training, education and upskilling of SIPTU's activists and staff. Trade union education in its broadest sense refers to a) the 'tools' required to be an effective union activist and b) awareness of the current social, political and economic 'issues' that form the background. So, training union representatives is core but SIPTU College also aims to provide a second-chance at education for union members while focussing on courses and programmes useful for social activism as much as for work.

SIPTU College is now in a growth phase aiming to expand on current offerings and develop new programmes. It currently offers a broad range of training options for union activists and most are QQI accredited, meaning your award is recognised outside of SIPTU College, both nationally and internationally. SIPTU College is a co-provider with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and other trade unions in the delivery of several modules in its *Advanced Activist* programme. SIPTU College also manages the ICTU/SIPTU Trade Union Studies Certificate programme, a QQI Level 6 programme at the National College of Ireland. Check the separate programme brochures for information and see the figure below.
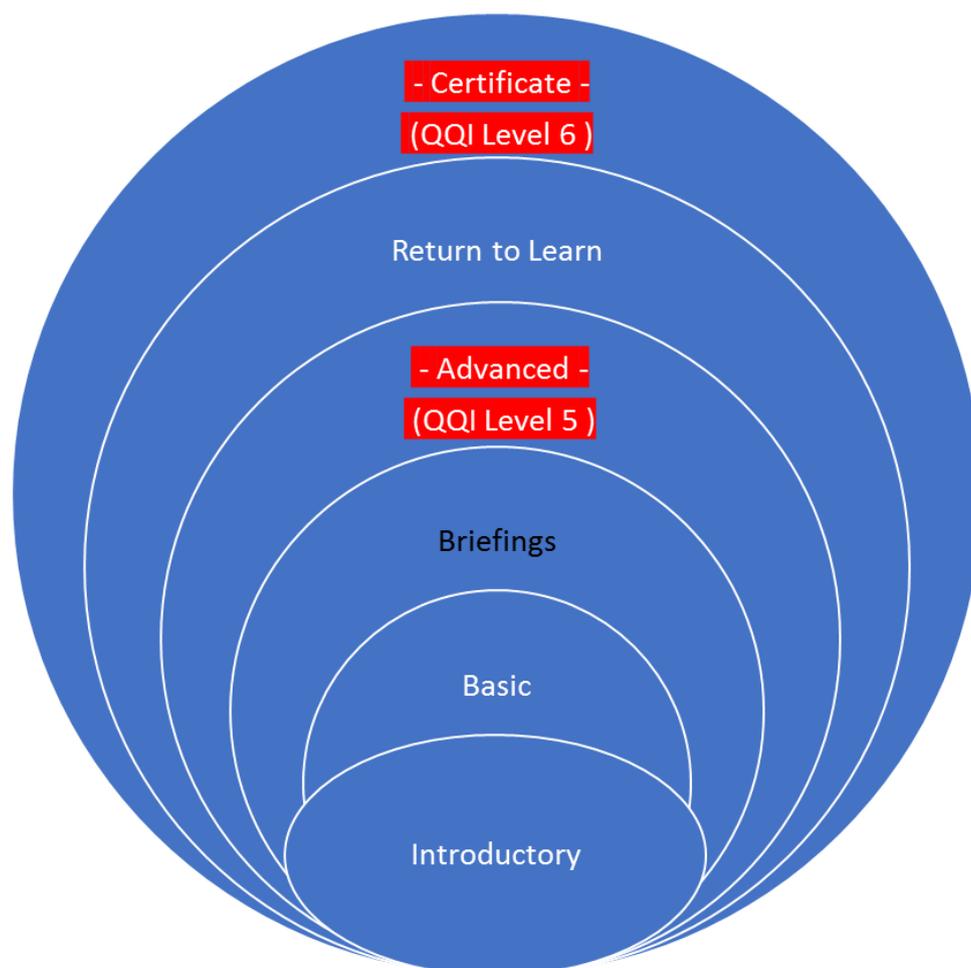

Figure 1 – SIPTU College programmes

Fairness and Equity

It is both policy and practice in SIPTU College to ensure fair treatment and equality of opportunity for all members in matters of education and training regardless of ethnic/national background, gender orientation, family status, ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, age or social background. We value and celebrate individual difference and work hard to ensure that every individual is treated equally.

Mutual support and respect

We strive to provide all learners and teaching staff with an environment which is mutually supportive and free from discrimination or harassment. Class room activities and material are free from discriminatory language and images.

Privacy, personal data and use of communications media

SIPTU College adheres to legislation around the use and recording of the personal data of learners. Data management procedures are appropriately quality assured by QQI. Learners and teaching staff are advised not to use mobile phones or other media technology inappropriately to record any aspect of course activities or to share such recordings or images inappropriately.

Admission and progression

Entry to SIPTU College courses is normally through your SIPTU Organiser. Entry requirements will be clearly advertised in course recruitment literature and on relevant SIPTU websites. No fees are charged for SIPTU College courses for SIPTU members.

Tutorial support

A learner-centered and supportive teaching and learning approach is used on all SIPTU College courses. If you are experiencing difficulties meeting course requirements, please ask for additional tutor support and advice.

Health and safety

All teaching venues are expected to meet high health and safety standards. You will be informed about local arrangements at your course venue, including arrangements for access, first aid, fire escapes, safe use of technologies/machinery, etc.

Illegal substances or alcohol will not be permitted in training venues. Smoking and vaping will be confined to designated outdoor areas only.

What learners can expect from us

As a learner, you can expect SIPTU College to provide the highest quality learning experience possible for you, to respect your personal data, to support you in achieving the required learning outcomes for your course, to assess your learning fairly, to take note of your feedback and evaluations, and to offer sound advice on your future learning development. We have an on-line resource available to all learners – www.siptulearn.ie – and our tutors offer individual support where needed. Quiet study space is available by arrangement and you may also use our Book Exchange.

What we expect from you

SIPTU College has a set of reasonable expectations from learners on its courses. We expect learners to inform themselves about their course requirements well in advance, to make a genuine effort to achieve the learning outcomes required, to participate fully in any group tasks, to perform to their optimum in assessment tasks, to adhere to health and safety requirements, to respect the rights of colleagues, to maintain confidentiality where required, and to give us honest evaluation afterwards. As a trade union college, all learners will be members of a trade union and will demonstrate their support for the union movement in their day-to-day activities and in their studies.

Our programmes

In addition to Basic English and ongoing briefing seminars, we have two main programmes, *Advanced Activist* training and the *Trade Union Studies* Certificate programme. The table below lists the individual modules in each. Learners will normally have availed of our *Introductory* and *Basic* courses first before moving on to the *Advanced* programme and then the *Certificate* programme. Please be aware that both programmes are currently under review and will be changing in 2020. This information is accurate as of August 2019.

Programme Name	Modules
Advanced Activist – QQI Level 5	Offered over 3 days or 8 nights
	Union Organising Skills
	Trade Union Representation
	Negotiation Skills
	Communications
	Employment Law
	Health & Safety Representation (offered in two parts each of 3 days duration)
	Personal Effectiveness
	Teamworking
	Work Practice
	Industrial Relations

PROGRAMME NAME	MODULES
Trade Union Studies – QQI Level 6	Offered over 4 days or 10 nights
	Collective Bargaining
	Employment Law
	Equality & Diversity
	Human Resource Management
	Introduction to Economics
	Health & Safety

Each of our programmes has a separate brochure which you should consult at the appropriate time. Some individual modules also have an information sheet and both will be made available to you as needed.

Written assignments/Projects

It is likely that assessment for your programme will involve written assignments. If you are required to submit a written assignment or a report, the presentation format and style will be explained to you in advance.

A few modules will require you to do a written examination and if you have any challenges with written examinations you should bring this to the attention of tutors in good time so that reasonable accommodation can be made for you.

Oral presentation individually or as part of a group

Some modules are examined by presentations or oral interviews, either individually or as a member of a group. In both circumstances the precise requirements and marking criteria will be explained to you in advance.

Skills demonstration or observed practical test

Some modules may require you to perform a specific task in examination conditions. In such cases you will know the requirements and assessment criteria in advance.

Group projects

If you are expected to participate in group-based learning projects and to submit a group report for assessment, the procedures and expectations will be explained clearly to you. In some cases, you may be expected to submit both a group report and an individual report for assessment.

Computer-based examinations

If your assessment is computer-based, such as in IT skills, appropriate computers and software will be made available for you.

Open-book examinations

Some examination arrangements require you to use books where it would be unreasonable to expect you to remember complex information, such as in law. If your course has an open book examination your tutor will explain precisely what is expected and permitted.

Learner record/diary/journal/portfolio/dossier

You may be required to keep a record or file of your learning activities during placement or work-based assignment which can be used as 'evidence' for assessment purpose. If a record or file is required your tutors will explain the format and expected content.

Submitting assessment tasks

You will be fully informed regarding dates, times and venues of assessment activities, and regarding deadlines and procedures for submitting written assignments. Some programmes require you to submit assignments electronically and you will be shown how to do this.

If penalties for late submissions apply, this process will be explained to you. Late submissions, however, <u>must</u> be agreed with your tutor in advance.

You should ensure that all your submissions have the required identification information.

You should get a receipt for submissions where this is provided and required.

You must keep copies of your own submissions.

Assessments

Calculation of assessment results

Assessment results are calculated according to approved assessment criteria and marking schemes for the modules on your course. Your module tutors may explain how marks are calculated and grades awarded.

Assessment feedback

If you require formative feedback about your assessment results so that you can improve in the future, you may request feedback from your module tutor/s.

Appeal of results

If you are surprised by a low assessment result you may request assessment feedback and an explanation of your result from your tutors in the first instance.

If you are still dissatisfied, you may request a meeting with the tutors, programme coordinator and possibly the External Verifier to establish if there are grounds for a formal appeal to QQI or NCI as appropriate. If you decide to proceed with a formal appeal, you should complete the required form and pay the required fee to QQI for each module concerned within one week of receiving your final approved result. If your appeal is successful, your fee may be refunded.

Repeat assessments

Where a learner is unsuccessful on a first attempt in an assessment activity, SIPTU College will endeavor to provide the learner with a repeat assessment opportunity depending on the nature of the activity and the practical issues involved. SIPTU College cannot guarantee that re-sit opportunities will be provided for those who fail to attend or submit work on the due date.

Plagiarism policy

You should clearly understand that plagiarism is deliberately representing the work or ideas of others as your own work. If you are using the ideas or work of others from books, journal articles, TV programmes, internet sources, class notes, etc. you should acknowledge and reference them correctly.

To avoid plagiarism, you will be required to complete a standard declaration that your written work for assessment is your own work, or that it is an appropriate element of a group project.

If plagiarism is suspected, you may be requested to explain the circumstance.

If the case of plagiarism is a serious one, you may lose marks, or be obliged to repeat the assessment activity appropriately.

If two or more learners submit identical work where individual work is required, all may be required to repeat the assignment.

Cases of plagiarism will be recorded on the learner record for examiners.

Reasonable accommodation

In the context of assessment, reasonable accommodation refers to adapting an assessment activity or examination conditions to cater for the needs of learners whose personal situation means that the assessment would otherwise be deemed as unfair, such as a learner injuring his/her writing hand and requiring a scribe for a written examination. It could, in individual circumstances, require enlarged script, an assistant for a practical task, sign language, rest periods, adaptive technologies/software, or extra time. Any such accommodation should be requested in good time to make appropriate arrangements.

Compassionate consideration

SIPTU College understands that learners can experience a major life event in the weeks immediately before an assessment date, such as a physical injury, trauma, or a family bereavement. In such a case the learner should discuss the possible implications for assessment with the tutor and, if necessary, apply for additional submission time or for a deferral of assessment.

Course/class cancellation policy and protection of enrolled learners

If you have been offered a course place and if a situation arises where your course needs to be cancelled prior to starting, or during delivery, SIPTU College will make every effort to enable you to take the course, or complete the course, at the most convenient future time possible. Rarely, individual classes may be postponed to

another date due to severe weather, tutor absence or other unavoidable circumstance. SIPTU College will make every effort to ensure that the new date is convenient to all.

How to find out more about SIPTU College

- Talk to your SIPTU Organiser and remember that they must nominate you to the Introductory, Basic and Advanced courses.
- Check out our schedule on the College website – www.siptucollege.ie
- Explore the **siptulearn** site – you will become a registered user once you start some of our courses.
- E-mail college@siptu.ie and ask to be added to the e-mailing list
- Visit our stand at Divisional and Biennial Delegate Conferences
- Take a look at our newsletters; programme brochures and module information sheets
- Follow us on Facebook

Your personal data – SIPTU College and QQI

If your SIPTU College course leads to a QQI award, you will have been asked for personal data and you might have some questions in this regard. The following FAQ from QQI should help to explain why such data is requested and returned. Please also refer to the SIPTU College data protection policy.

Q: Why did I have to give my PPSN, name and date of birth in order to receive an award made my QQI?
A: QQI uses your PPSN as a unique identifier. It allows all your achievements to be kept within one record on the QQI certification system. Your name is recorded because it is printed on your certificate. Your date of birth is used for statistical purposes. It can also help to trace your records on the certification system, especially if you were certified by any of QQI's legacy bodies (HETAC, FETAC, NCVA, NCEA). PPSNs were not used prior to 2005.

Q: What other data about me does the training provider give to QQI?
A: In order to process your award and to issue a certificate to you, QQI needs information about the course you are on, the award you hope to achieve and the results/grades you have achieved.

Q: Does QQI use the contact details I gave to the education and training provider, to contact me?
A: The contact details that you submitted are only used by your education and training provider. As QQI only deals with learners via their education and training provider, they do not contact learners directly.

Q: How long does QQI hold information about my award?
A: As an awarding body, QQI has a national responsibility to keep all records indefinitely. Many award holders contact QQI for verification of their qualifications, for a variety of reasons e.g.

- commencing new employment
- newly introduced regulations that require specific qualifications e.g. Childcare
- proof of qualification to access a college programme
- qualification evaluation for residency in other countries.

As QQI holds records for its legacy awarding bodies HETAC, FETAC, NCVA and NCEA, this service can be provided to a wide range of award holders, dating back to the 1970s.

Q: How are my records stored?
A: When you complete a course, your education and training provider submits your data to QQI, using our secure certification system. Historical records are held on another of QQI's secure databases or, on paper files.

Q: Why did my training provider ask me for proof that I am not required to pay for my certificate?
A: QQI charges for each certificate it issues. Some learners are entitled to an exemption from that fee. Your training provider will require proof that this is the case. You will subsequently be recorded as "Fees Exempt" on QQI's Secure Certification System.